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2d Session, { } No. 185.

INFORMATION CONCERNING ARMY POSTS.

DECEMBER 18, 1911.—Referred to the House Calendar and ordered to be printed.

Mr. BULKLEY, from the Committee on Expenditures in the War Department, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. Res. 343.]

The Committee on Expenditures in the War Department, to which was referred the resolution (H. Res. 343) requesting the Secretary of War to furnish information concerning alleged needless expense of maintaining the Army, begs leave to submit the following report and recommends that said resolution be passed.

The Annual Report of the Secretary of War for the year 1911, dated December 4, 1911, contains the following language concerning the distribution of the mobile Army of the United States and the expense of maintaining it at widely scattered Army posts:

The mobile Army itself is distributed among 49 Army posts in 24 States and Territories. Thirty-one of these posts have a capacity for less than a regiment each; only 6 have a capacity for more than a regiment; and only 1 has a capacity for a brigade. The average number of organizations to each of the 49 posts is only 9 companies, giving an average strength in men for each post of only 650.

Nearly all of these posts have been located in their present situations for reasons which are either now totally obsolete or which were from the beginning purely local. Most of them were originally placed where they are with reference to possible Indian troubles during times when such troubles were possible. Comparatively few of them are in positions suited to meet the strategic needs of national action or defense.

The posts have also universally been constructed upon a plan which involves a maximum initial cost of construction and a maximum cost of maintenance both in money and men. Instead of using compact quadrangles of barracks, such as are commonly found in other countries, leaving the officers to find private quarters near by, we have built our posts in the form of scattered settlements, usually far remote from large towns and cities. This involves large details of men for police and guard duty while the posts are occupied, and even when the troops are temporarily withdrawn for maneuver or other purpose a heavy drain is made upon the size of the mobilized force, through the necessity of leaving large numbers of caretakers at each of the posts.

In short, we have scattered our Army over the country as if it were merely groups of local constabulary instead of a national organization. The result is an Army which is extraordinarily expensive to maintain, and one whose efficiency for the main purpose of its existence has been nullified so far as geographical location can nullify it. It is true that the small units into which it has thus been subdivided have as a whole maintained their efficiency to a remarkable extent. It is also true that the shortcomings imposed upon the Army by its lack of organization have not been manifested

in the recent wars in which it has been engaged. But the chief end of maintaining a military establishment is that the country may be prepared against the happily remote contingency of war with a first-class power, and against that contingency the organization, training, and supply of our Army can be made very much more effective than they are.

The administrative work of keeping up these numerous small posts, the excess of paper work required by the segregation of the units, and the large overhead charges constantly carried by such a system, have combined to make the maintenance of the Army extraordinarily expensive. It is difficult to make comparisons between it and foreign armies with accuracy, but it is a conservative estimate that we pay per effective rifleman between two and five times as much as any first-class power on the Continent of Europe; and this comparison is made after excluding from the comparison the higher pay and subsistence which our soldiers receive.

My predecessors have frequently called attention to this unnecessary expense and to the impairment of efficiency caused by the foregoing facts, and have urged a reorganization of the Army upon a basis of larger tactical units and a rearrangement of garrisons with this in view. The necessity for such reorganization is now growing constantly more pressing. Not only is the population within the United States constantly increasing and thus outrunning its former ratio to the Army kept for its defense, but new demands are being constantly made for the withdrawal of portions of that Army to protect our outlying possessions. The fortifications recently authorized by Congress for the defense of Pearl Harbor and Honolulu in the Hawaiian Islands are approaching completion. This necessitates the establishment there of a sufficient mobile force to prevent successful landings on those coasts of the island which are not protected by the fortifications of Pearl Harbor and Honolulu. The exits and locks of the Panama Canal must now be protected, and it has become necessary to send a mobile force of at least a brigade to the Isthmus of Panama as well as coast artillery-men for this purpose. This not only gives protective insurance but turns the Navy free for its legitimate functions. The requirements of Alaska are growing. Each of these demands tends to deplete the mobile force left within the United States, and makes it even more essential than before that that force should be disposed of to the best instead of the least advantage.

Finally, during the spring and summer we have had, in the mobilization of troops along the Mexican frontier, an object lesson in the great advantages in economy and efficiency which can be accomplished by a proper disposition of troops.

A force of about 16,000 men was collected from various posts and concentrated into the tactical organization of a division and two separate brigades. Orders were issued to officers in command of these troops with a view to a careful study of the lessons of the mobilization, and interesting experiments were made for this purpose. During October, in company with the Chief of Staff, I visited the troops then remaining in the area of mobilization in the endeavor to obtain at first hand the benefit of the experiences thus acquired by our officers.

STEPS TAKEN AND IN CONTEMPLATION.

A thorough reorganization of our military establishment to remedy the foregoing defects would involve much legislation and would encounter many most serious difficulties. Upward of \$94,000,000 have been spent upon our existing posts. Ineffective and expensive to maintain as this system is, it nevertheless represents an investment which can not be easily changed nor abandoned. The source of profit which each post furnishes to neighboring communities causes a local pressure against any change in location and brings constant influence to bear toward further expenditures in that locality. Nevertheless, steps have been taken and other steps are in course of prosecution to correct so far as possible these faults of organization.

The resolution (H. Res. 343) which the committee has had under consideration is as follows:

Resolved, That the Secretary of War be, and he is hereby, requested to send to the House of Representatives full information relative to certain statements made in his annual report for the year nineteen hundred and eleven concerning the distribution of the mobile Army of the United States in such manner as to involve needless expense, and concerning the location and construction of any Army posts in such manner as to involve unnecessary initial cost and unnecessary cost of maintenance, said information to cover specifically the following facts:

First. The names of all Army posts which have been located in their present situations for reasons which are now totally obsolete.

Second. The names of all Army posts which have been located in their present situations for reasons which were from the beginning purely local.

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Third. The names of all Army posts which were originally placed where they are with reference to possible Indian troubles, and the names of such of these as may be placed where such troubles are now no longer possible.

Fourth. The names of all Army posts which are situated in positions suited to meet the strategic needs of national action or defense.

Fifth. The names of all posts which have been constructed and the names of all posts where any construction work has been carried on during the ten years ending June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and eleven, upon a plan which involved maximum initial cost of construction and maximum cost of maintenance in money and men; the amounts expended on such posts, respectively, for construction purposes during the said period; the names of all Army officers or officials of the War Department who have recommended such expenditures and approved such plans; and the names of all Army officers and officials of the War Department who have protested against such expenditures and plans.

Sixth. The specific steps taken by the several Secretaries of War during the period of ten years ending June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and eleven, to prevent unnecessary expenditures and impairment of efficiency caused by ill-advised location and construction of posts and inefficient distribution of the mobile Army, and the reasons, so far as they can be assigned, why the successive heads of the War Department have been unsuccessful in preventing unnecessary expenditures and impairment of efficiency.

Seventh. The present intention of the War Department with respect to recommending legislation with a view to putting an end to the present extravagant distribution of the Army, and the steps, if any, already taken or now being taken by the department in preparing such recommendations.

Eighth. A full statement of the serious difficulties anticipated by the department in carrying out the policies of economy and efficiency in respect to the subject matter of this inquiry.

Ninth. The number and cost of Army posts which have been abandoned during the ten years ending June thirtieth, nineteen hundred and eleven, and the names and cost of all Army posts which would have to be abandoned in order to put an end to the extravagance and inefficiency resulting from improper distribution of the mobile Army.

Tenth. The estimated annual saving in money which would follow an efficient and economical distribution of the mobile Army, assuming said Army to remain at its present size, and the estimated increase in number of officers and men which could efficiently be made in the mobile Army were it properly distributed within the present annual cost of maintaining the Army.

The purpose of the resolution is to secure for the Congress and the public full and specific information upon the very important questions which the Secretary of War has briefly treated in his report.

Your committee in the course of its general inquiry into expenditures in the War Department at hearings held during the first session of this Congress secured evidence tending to show that very large sums of public money have in the past been expended in the building of Army posts in an unwise manner. Such expenditures not only impose upon the Government a heavy and needless first-construction cost, but at the same time needlessly swell the annual cost of maintaining the Army without in any way increasing its efficiency, even resulting in many cases in actual lessening of the efficiency of the Army.

The statement of the Secretary of War above quoted tends to confirm the information already secured by your committee, and it is believed that if these statements are fully justified by the facts it will be necessary in order to overcome the evil complained of to have the case stated with the greatest possible particularity and frankness, so that it may be made entirely clear where the public interest lies from the military point of view and to what extent the public interest is opposed by local interests.



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